

is a Broward School Board representative on the Council of Great City Schools, National School Board Association, and Council of Urban Boards of Education and serves on the boards of the Coconut Creek Elementary School Advisory Form and Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

Education is fundamental to the long-term success of Florida and our nation. As a parent and a congressman, I understand the need to make an unwavering commitment to the education of our children. Nora Rupert has demonstrated this commitment through decades of compassion for the children of South Florida, and she inspires all of us to live by her example.

RECOGNIZING JO HODGIN FOR 21 YEARS OF SERVICE TO WOLF TRAP FOUNDATION FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

**HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 6, 2014*

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize my constituent, Jo Hodgkin, on the occasion of her retirement after 21 years of service to the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts. Through her leadership of Wolf Trap's government relations program, and her coordination of a wide range of special initiatives for the Foundation, Ms. Hodgkin, a resident of Annandale, has expanded upon Wolf Trap's success as America's National Park for the Performing Arts.

Ms. Hodgkin began her career by serving as deputy director for the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington, now known as Culture Capital. In that role, she fostered cooperation among hundreds of regional arts organizations. She also launched the Business Volunteers for the Arts program, which forged connections between the arts and business communities in the Washington, D.C., region. The BVA program, featured in Washingtonian magazine, facilitated the completion of hundreds of arts projects, and it expanded the role of private business in the arts.

When Ms. Hodgkin became director of Foundation Grants at Wolf Trap, she increased annual grants income from \$600,000 to \$1.2 million. Based on her tremendous success, she was promoted into her current role as Director of Planning and Initiatives. A central achievement of Ms. Hodgkin's tenure was the successful management of the organization's government relations program. She has engaged policy leaders and decision-makers at all levels of government, educating them about the broad benefits of Wolf Trap's initiatives across the country. Her outreach efforts not only have secured greater support for Wolf Trap, but also helped mobilize the larger arts community to advance their interests.

In addition, Ms. Hodgkin spearheaded a range of special initiatives for the Foundation. For example, she collaborated with former Wolf Trap Foundation President and CEO Terre Jones on the acclaimed Face of America series, which celebrated America's national parks through a variety of artistic mediums, including music, spoken word, and dance. The series reached a national audience on PBS, and one of its films, On the Wings of a Dream, won an Emmy in 2004.

Ms. Hodgkin's three-decades of service to the arts have helped to enrich the Wolf Trap Foundation, the Northern Virginia community, and our Nation. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring Jo Hodgkin for her service to our National Park for the Performing Arts, and in wishing her and her family all the best in their future endeavors.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. ALLYSON Y. SCHWARTZ**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 6, 2014*

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 187 I was unable to attend.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

COMMEMORATING THE 66TH ANNIVERSARY OF ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 6, 2014*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 66th Anniversary of Israel's Independence. On this day, called Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel celebrates its founding by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion in 1948. Since then, Israel has stood as a dynamic democracy in the Middle East region with its rich culture, vibrant economy, and commitment to peace.

Yet, independence has come at a great price. This is why, the day before celebrating its independence, Israel observes Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Memorial Day. On Yom Hazikaron, Israel remembers all those who gave their lives defending their families, their communities, and their country. This year, Israel honored the more than 23,000 soldiers killed in the line of duty and another 1,800 civilian victims of terrorism. I have always been deeply moved by the duality of Israel's independence celebration, at once both sorrowful and triumphant, and know of no other country that combines such profound sorrow with such a festive event.

I am proud of the close relationship that has developed between the United States and Israel over the past 66 years. These ties, based on the common bond of democracy, economic vitality, and cultural affinity, remain as strong now under President Barack Obama as when President Harry Truman first recognized the Jewish State. From religious kinships to shared interests, and from military strengths to commercial relations, the friendship between the United States is unbreakable.

However, Israel continues to face serious regional threats, and these concerns are also shared by the United States. One of the largest threats to regional stability and Israel's security today is Iran. Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and support for terrorism pose a grave threat to both Israel and the global community at large. The statements of aggression made by Iran's leaders must be taken seriously, and the international community has a

responsibility to act to prevent a nuclear Iran. I have supported numerous sanctions efforts in Congress to cripple Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons, and will continue to do so as long as Iran insists on pursuing its nuclear program.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have visited Israel 15 times as a Member of Congress, and to have called every Israeli Prime Minister from Yitzhak Rabin to Benjamin Netanyahu my friend. The United States must continue to support Israel's right to self-defense, increase its engagement in the region, and work towards finding a fair solution that enables both Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace, security, and prosperity. As Co-Chair of the Democratic Israel Working Group, I remain committed to working with my colleagues in Congress to further strengthen our special relationship with Israel.

HONORING SHANTASIA DENAYE THOMAS

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 6, 2014*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a goal oriented student, Shantasia Denaye Thomas, from Crystal Springs High School.

Shantasia Denaye Thomas is the daughter of Mr. Richard and Mrs. Felicia Thomas. She has two siblings: Sha'Reika Johnson and Shamaya Thomas.

Shantasia is an honor student at Crystal Springs High School with 4.0 Grade Point Average. As a standout student at Crystal Springs High School, Shantasia is a member of the SADD Club, Mu Alpha Theta, Student Council and serves as President of Jobs for Mississippi Graduates Program.

Shantasia's leadership is well-known in her community as she serves as President of the Crystal Springs Mayor's Youth Council, a member of H.Y.M (Holiness Youth Ministries), Daughters of Esther, and Sunday school at her church, Greater Damascus Church of Christ Holiness USA.

Shantasia is also a member of the National Honor's Society for High School Scholars.

Shantasia is blessed with the gift of musicianship and she plays the piano for two churches. In her spare time she loves making music and writing poetry.

Shantasia accredits her determination and spirit of excellence to her great-grand mother, Mrs. Marie Johnson. She says Mrs. Johnson is a strong woman of God who has encouraged her to follow her heart and excel above and beyond, because with God all things are possible.

Shantasia plans on attending Tougaloo College, where she will major in Biology to become a Pediatric Oncologist.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Shantasia Denaye Thomas as a student who is making a difference in her community.